

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS KIRKUK 000008

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/I
BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [KDP](#)

SUBJECT: (U) KURDISH PARLIAMENT APPROVES KRG UNIFICATION

REF: KIRKUK 0004

(U) SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PROTECT ACCORDINGLY; NOT FOR
INTERNET DISTRIBUTION.

[11.](#) (U) SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION: Ambassador Khalilzad attended the January 21 special session of the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA), which unanimously approved reftel agreement on unification of the two Kurdistan Regional Governments (KRGs). Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, which controls Sulaymaniyah) and KRG President Masoud Barzani (leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, which controls Erbil and Dahuk), signed the agreement after it was read aloud. Another special session will be called in a week's time to appoint the Prime Minister. The key ministries of Interior, Justice, Peshmerga, and Finance are to be merged progressively within one year. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION.

[12.](#) (SBU) KNA Speaker Adnan Mufti chaired the special session in Erbil, which was held in the presence of the US, British, Chinese, French, and Iranian Ambassadors. Other guests included former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, Deputy Prime Minister Rosh Shaways (KDP), Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zeibari (KDP), and Planning Minister Barham Saleh (PUK). As always, the only flag in evidence throughout Erbil was that of Iraqi Kurdistan, though both the Iraqi and Kurdish anthems were played when Presidents Talabani and Barzani arrived at the KNA.

[13.](#) (SBU) No individuals were named for any of the positions to be filled in the unified KRG, but it was stipulated that both parties support President Talabani to remain head of state. It was made clear that the posts of Prime Minister and KNA Speaker would rotate by the end of 2007, whether or not regional elections are held by then. While Nechirvan Barzani is still the choice for Prime Minister, the PUK has not yet decided on its nominee for Deputy Prime Minister; outgoing KRG-Sulaymaniyah PM Omar Fattah had appeared to drop out of contention, but is being mentioned again.

[14.](#) (SBU) It was announced that a joint committee of PUK and KDP would be formed in each province of Kurdistan, and that the Prime Minister would determine Kurdistan's representation abroad (now, the two parties often have competing offices).

[15.](#) (SBU) Talabani gave a brief speech, in Arabic (as is his custom, a way of reminding everyone that he is President of all Iraq). He thanked the Coalition, noted that the Kurds have many friends now (a reference to the old saying that "the Kurds have no friend but the mountains"), and stressed that the Kurds are part of the solution in Iraq, not part of the problem.

[16.](#) (SBU) Barzani spoke in Kurdish, recalling that the KDP had long demanded "democracy for Iraq, then autonomy for Kurdistan." He said "the time for armed struggle is over," it is now time to defend the interests of Kurdistan by political and civil means. He made clear that the interests of Kurdistan encompass those of all its inhabitants regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, not just the Kurds. He called on the political parties to refrain from interfering with the KRG, pledged commitment to a free-market economy and equal opportunity, and called on politicians to choose either government service or private business (not both), noting the need to strengthen the people's trust in their government. He called for power-sharing and transparency because "absolute power corrupts." He affirmed freedom of expression but insisted that it be practiced within the law, not by rioting and burning. He apologized to the victims of past conflict between KDP and PUK, and spoke of the need to break through the psychological barrier between the two parties.

[17.](#) (SBU) COMMENT: More than anything else, Barzani's frank words about past conflict and lingering distrust between KDP and PUK suggest that this is more than window-dressing, but rather a genuine attempt to open a new chapter in Iraqi Kurdish history, at a time when the Kurds are thriving and have an almost-undreamed-of opportunity to help shape an Iraq that is not inimical to them.

BELL